

MEDREGION UPDATE

Regional Office Tunis

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MEPI in 2009—apply for a grant!

- The Tunis Regional Office has around \$2 million to support grants in the region.
- Make this the year to become involved with your community...and MEPI activities!

Promoting Principles of Partnership and Cooperation Between Governments and Civil Society Rabat, Morocco 5-6, October 2009

By Wahid Labidi

Over 150 representatives of civil society attended the Rabat Workshop on Democracy and Local Governance in the Broader Middle East and North Africa region (BMENA) organized by the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights (OMDH) and No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), in cooperation with the Governments of Italy and Morocco, co-chairs of the 2009 Forum for the Future.

The workshop took place October 5-6. Along with two other thematic workshops — "The Impact of the International Financial Crisis on the BMENA Region" in Beirut, September 26-27, and "Human Development and Human Security" in Doha, October 10-14,



Forum for the Future, Rabat Morocco 5-6 October, 2009

2009 — the Rabat Workshop contributed to the formulation of ideas for the Forum. Rabat offered a further opportunity to promote productive dialogue between civil society and governments of the

BMENA countries and their partners, on issues of coordination and how to further political development, democracy and human rights.

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FFF 2004



FFF 2005



FFF 2006

**FORUM FOR THE FUTURE
MARRAKECH,
November 2009**



FFF 2007



FFF 2008

- The Forum for the Future (FFF) is a cooperative effort to advance the universal values of human dignity, democracy, economic opportunity, and social justice by the states of the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) region, the industrialized nations, and other partners. These partners seek to promote and develop political, economic, and social reform in the region.

Host governments of (2009) FFF:

- Morocco
- Italy

Civil Society coordinators:

- "Organisation Marocaine des droits Humains"
- "No Peace Without Justice"



MEPI: Assisting “Bottom-Up” Demand for Change

By Peter Mulrean *(Serialized from the Foreign Service Magazine)*

In August 2004, two MEPI Regional Offices opened in Abu Dhabi and Tunis, staffed by both US diplomats and local specialists. The role of the Regional Offices was (and is) to establish relationships on the ground with reformers across the Arab world, to listen to their needs and objectives, and to develop programs to support them.

The MEPI Regional Offices work closely with the US embassies in each country to maintain contact with partners and oversee the MEPI projects being implemented.

The regional-office approach of working directly with local partners grew out of MEPI's early experience. Initially, MEPI funded primarily well-known American NGOs to implement large regional programs. This approach had some success in establishing relationships and testing certain types of assistance, but it was not adequate to fulfill MEPI's mandate to be flexible and

responsive to the needs and opportunities of reformers on the ground. To accomplish this, MEPI shifted increasingly to direct funding of local civil society partners, which is central to our strategy and serves the overriding US objective of supporting home-grown democratic practices. Local groups sometimes need help developing certain skills and capacities, but their understanding of local circumstances and long-term commitment make them better catalysts and shepherds of positive change in their countries.

The MEPI Local Grants program became one of the most effective means of responding quickly to reform opportunities. The Tunis RO went from funding 18 projects for nearly \$500,000 in 2004 to 41 projects for nearly \$2,000,000 in 2008. Examples of projects developed and implemented by local groups include an Egyptian NGO fighting corruption by exposing financial irregularities

during major corporations' stockholder meetings; training hundreds of local democracy activists in communications, civic engagement, and negotiation techniques; producing a play in Morocco to teach illiterate women about their rights under the new family code; and engaging teenagers living in a Hizballah-dominated area of Lebanon on "democracy in action" activities, including volunteerism, advocacy campaigns, and media training.

In addition to the Local Grants' rapid response capability, MEPI developed a series of programs that represent a longer-term effort to help build the next generation of local reformers. For example, an early MEPI program for young Arab businesswomen, the Business Internship Program, was judged highly successful in its combination of an intensive academic course (mini-MBA) with a three-month internship in a US business. Employing this model, MEPI

developed new programs as part of our broader effort to strengthen the capacity of reformers in a range of sectors. The New Generation Program and the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship provide training and internships to political activists who have already begun making a mark in their respective fields. The Women's Legal and Business Network offered a cadre of professionals the opportunity to work in the US legal and business environment while learning from each other and their American counterparts.

This combination of short-term MEPI support to reform efforts on the ground through Local Grants and longer-term MEPI support to the next generation of reformers through training represented a refinement and a reaffirmation of assisting “bottom-up” demand for change. In the next newsletter, we will look at some of the broader “lessons learned” of the Tunis RO's first five years.

Your Voice. Your Video: Democracy video Contest

Create a video short that completes the phrase:
“Democracy is...”

Winners will be awarded: an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, New York and Hollywood to attend gala screenings of the winning videos, gain exposure to the U.S. film and television industry and meet with creative talent, democracy advocates and government leaders.

To learn more please visit : www.videochallenge.america.gov



Bedouin High School Girls Benefit from Pre-Academic Program

The Association for the Promotion of Bedouin Women Education in the Negev launched a pre-academic program aimed to help more than 100 Bedouin high school girls in Israel, from grades ten, eleven and twelve, prepare for university.

Participants have been receiving tutoring in key exam subjects, as well as counseling on how to cope with personal and social challenges they may encounter with a focus on women's rights and empowerment.

The program has successfully completed the second year of three learning cycles of 10th, 11th and 12th grades. Ninety-five students started the year and 88 have finished it (36 in the 10th grade, 27 in the 11th and 25

the 12th grades). The dropout rate is 8% and it is below average.

Twenty-five girls graduated from the 12th grade, all of them did their matriculation exams, and they will know the results in November 2009.

Seventeen of the 12th graders have registered for higher education institutes which represents 68% of the students.

In a survey conducted by the Association for the Promotion of Bedouin Women Education in the Negev to learn about the previous years' graduates, it was noticed that graduates have applied and were accepted to university even 2-3 years after graduation.



Students participating in the pre-academic Program

Academic institutes that of the graduates are accepted graduates of the currently studying or have finished university. Out of university graduates, about 75% are working for a living, most of them in the area of their studies.

All in all, about 65% of all

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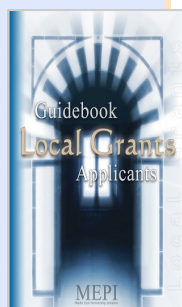
The workshop's findings will be presented at the Ministerial Meeting of the 2009 Forum for the Future in Marrakech 2-3 November 2009. Rabat's contribution will add to the discussion at the Forum and provide momentum for constructive proposals, sound recommendations and meaningful cooperation between BMENA countries and civil society and the private sector.

The Rabat Workshop was an important component of the 2009 Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) partnership. It builds upon the principles of partnership and cooperation between governments and civil society enshrined in the "Partnership Document" of the Fifth Forum for the Future in Abu Dhabi in 2008.

Submit your grant applications now!

Funding is available now for Local Grants. Please contact your country's U.S. Embassy MEPI Committee and see the guidebook available on our [website](http://www.medregion.mepi.state.gov) for step-by-step instructions in English and Arabic.

www.medregion.mepi.state.gov





2009 Picture Contest: What Does MEPI Mean to You?

MEPI is always looking for images to give life to its mission and activities. We are creating a portfolio of pictures to use on our websites and in our publications to help us tell the MEPI story.

To do this, we are asking you to send us your best photo

(s) of MEPI programs and activities. The photo(s) can feature a group or an individual, and can be still or action shots. MEPI offices (D.C., Tunis, Abu Dhabi) will showcase some of the photos in upcoming promotional campaigns, including making posters for MEPI and using the pictures on MEPI websites.

The pictures will be judged by Tunis and Abu Dhabi Regional Office staff, MEPI staff in Washington, D.C., the State Department Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Office of Public Diplomacy, and the State Department Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Office of the Assistant Secretary.

The winner(s) will be announced in mid-December. You'll receive wide recognition for your winning picture(s)! Winning submissions and photographers will be featured on MEPI websites, and you'll have the opportunity to describe your picture and your inspiration for taking it in a video or essay.

Please send your photo(s) to MEPI RO in Tunis at mepi-medregion@state.gov if you are sending from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Territories, or Tunisia.

For all other countries, please send your photos to the MEPI Public Affairs Coordinator in Washington, D.C., Kelley Osterthaler, at osterthalerke2@state.gov.

We look forward to seeing your photos!

Contest Guidelines:

- **Deadline to submit pictures is December 1st, 2009.** You can submit as many pictures as you like.
- Please ensure the participants you are photographing are aware that they might be featured on MEPI websites and in MEPI publications. **You are NOT required to get a signature from people in your photos. You are only required to make sure the participants and implementers photographed know that MEPI might be using the photo/video/quote in public materials.**
- Each photo must include a date and attribution (who or what organization took the picture?).
- You must include a short paragraph for each photo, explaining why the image captures "What MEPI Means to You," and a short caption for each photo explaining who/what you have captured in the image.
- You must provide your name, nationality, contact information and which MEPI activity you were involved in.

More questions? Email MEPI Public Affairs Specialist Kelley Osterthaler at:

osterthalerke2@state.gov



MEPI Regional Office Tunis

Housed at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, administers MEPI local programs in Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and West Bank/Gaza, and accounts for around \$2 million in program funding each year. In addition to coordinating with U.S. Embassies throughout the region, the Tunis RO organizes conferences (such as the Business Women's Summit and Student Leaders Alumni Conference), facilitates exchange programs (such as the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program and the Students Leaders program), and provides a variety of funding opportunities (such as the MEPI Local Grants program and Civil Society Grants), as well as supporting visits, seminars, and training programs designed to advance reform.

We are on the web!
www.medregion.mepi.state.gov